

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

September 21, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this virtual meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, Chair	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police, Vice Chair	X	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	Left at 5:15 p.m.
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement Administrator	X	
Jim Nash, City Council Vice President	X	
Karen Foster, Ward 2 City Councilor	X	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	X	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	X	Left at 4:30 p.m. & returned at 5:00 p.m.
Diana Day, Citizen	X	
Vacant, Citizen	Absent	
Advisor	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Maggie Chan, DPW Traffic Engineer	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Cyndi Quinn, DPW Administration Manager	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, DPW Clerk	X	

2. Public comment

- Lilly Lombard of the South Street neighborhood of Northampton said that she is in favor of the Traffic Calming Request (TCR) on Olive Street (Agenda item 5.d.) as well as the Proposed Ordinance Relative to Parking on Main Street Downtown (Agenda item 5.c.). She also urged the TPC to re-open discussion of the parking recommendations that were presented by Ben Weil of Main Street for Everyone at the last TPC meeting;
- Amy Meltzer of Northampton feels that ordinary citizens are confused about ways they can participate in matters discussed by the TPC. She would like to see improved transparency and communication from the TPC;
- Susan Murphy of the South Street neighborhood of Northampton is in favor of the TCR on Olive Street. She experiences the problems mentioned on a daily basis on Olive Street and Fort Street as drivers go speeding into the Meadows;

- Michael Sullivan of 25 Fort Street said that he feels that the speeding analysis that was done for the TCR for South Street was ineffective due to the placement of the speed box that captured the data. He would like to see another analysis done in which the speed box is placed in the middle of the 35 mph speed limit section of the roadway;
- Brett Constantine sits on the Pedestrian & Bike Subcommittee and will be reporting back to them about this meeting.

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (s): July 20, 2021

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the July 20, 2021 meeting.	Adam Novitt	Jim Nash	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 1

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations

- Department of Public Works (DPW) - Director Donna LaScaleia
 - **Masonic Street Parking Lot & Amber Lane** - The failing sewer line has been remedied and temporary paving has been installed in the construction areas. The parking lot has been reopened to the public;
 - **Roundhouse Parking Lot** - This project is for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Roundhouse Parking Lot. The work is expected to be completed by early fall 2021. The parking lot will be closed for the duration of the construction;
 - **Paving Contract 2021** - Improvements are proposed for Pine Street, Warfield Place, Hayes Avenue, Meadow Street, and Loudville Road. Pavement reclamation began on Monday, September 20th, and will continue into the following week. Base course paving will begin on Friday, September 24th, and continue into the following week. Final paving is expected to occur in early November. Detours are in place. Motorists should expect traffic delays and seek alternate routes;
 - **MassDOT projects** – Any questions about the following projects should be directed to MassDOT District 2:
 - ❖ King Street Corridor Improvements
 - ❖ Damon Road Reconstruction
 - ❖ Exit 19 at Damon Road
 - ❖ I-91 Bridges over Route 5
 - ❖ The railroad
 - ❖ Hockanum Road
- Department of Planning and Sustainability - Director Wayne Feiden
 - They have recently signed contracts for projects on:
 - ❖ Pleasant Street
 - ❖ Hockanum Road & roundabout
 - ❖ Leonard Street in Leeds
 - ❖ Florence Center (contract has been awarded but not signed)
 - There are three upcoming public forums for the Picture Main Street project.

5. Matters before the Commission

- a) Proposed Ordinance for a stop sign at the intersection of Cross Path Road and Riverbank Road

- Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
- A motion for a positive recommendation was proposed and seconded;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to a Stop Sign on Cross Path Road to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Jody Kasper	Adam Novitt	Yes, 9 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- Background: After trees and brush were cleared on Riverbank Road in August 2021, a sloped area that drops 20 – 30 feet down to the river became exposed. There are safety concerns that a vehicle could now accidentally end up in the river;
- This Ordinance is being proposed based on recommendations from an Engineering Department analysis;
- Councilor Nash will be doing outreach to the residents in his Ward. He expects that they will welcome this proposal, but he would like to see it go forward to City Council before the outreach is completed;
- Councilors Foster & Nash discussed the possibility of some other solutions with Director LaScaleia, and then they and Adam Novitt expressed their support for the proposed Ordinance as written;
- A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

- b) Proposed Ordinance for a stop sign on Evergreen Road and Chestnut Avenue Extension

- Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
- A motion for a positive recommendation was proposed and seconded;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Stop Signs on Evergreen Road and Chestnut Avenue to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Jody Kasper	Jim Nash	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- Background: Chestnut Avenue Extension and Beaver Brook Loop are both private ways. After they were developed there were requests made for a stop sign;
- The Police Department (PD) was unable to get much speed data because there were so few vehicles on the road during the measurement period. There were no collisions in the 5 year look-back period of 2015-2019;
- The DPW determined that there are obstructions due to the steep roadway, and so they are recommending a four-way stop;
- Dale West of Leeds is highly in favor of at least one stop sign to improve the safety of the thirty or so children that use the intersection to go to and from school daily;
- Lauren Duffy of Beaver Brook Loop in Leeds would like to see two opposing stop signs at this four way intersection. She has observed many near misses over the years;
- Norma Adler of Chestnut Avenue Extension said that drivers speed on Evergreen Road, and there are almost 40 children that utilize the area. She strongly supports the addition of 3 additional stop signs;
- Councilor Maori said that many residents have weighed in, and she will be supporting this Ordinance when it comes before City Council;

- Director LaScaleia received an email from Tanya Dragan of 9 Beaver Brook Loop strongly supporting the addition of a stop sign. The text of this email is appended (Attachment A) to the minutes;
- A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

c) Proposed Ordinance relative to parking on Main Street downtown

- Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
- A motion for a positive recommendation was proposed and seconded;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Parking on Main Street to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Nanci Forrestall	Jody Kasper	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- Background: A road safety audit was performed involving many stakeholders in order to identify safety challenges regarding parking on Main Street. All parties agreed that cars backing up into crosswalks and/or parking too close to crosswalks (restricting visibility) are the biggest problems. Both actions create dangerous conditions for pedestrians. The proposal to remove five parking spaces is intended to remedy the situation;
- Nanci Forrestall is very much in support of this proposed Ordinance, as it removes sightline obstructions and enhances pedestrian safety;
- Councilors Foster and Nash expressed support as well;
- A discussion followed about changing the language in this and other Ordinances to replace the word “handicapped” with the word “accessible.” The TCP is not familiar with the appropriate steps needed to initiate this suggestion at this time. It was decided to send this proposed Ordinance forward as written;
- A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

d) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request on Olive Street

- This TCR was submitted on 2/24/21, and referenced safety concerns for dog-walkers and others due to vehicles speeding after dark and the lack of sidewalks;
- The DPW found that this road, which connects South Street and Old Springfield Road, has one marked crosswalk, no record of a speed regulation (the defacto speed limit is therefore 30 mph), and pavement in fair condition;
- The PD collected speed data in October 2020 which showed that of 480 vehicles, only 11 had enforceable actions. A five year look-back period showed no collisions. Their conclusion is that there is not a significant speeding issue overall on Olive Street;
- Councilor Thorpe said that he has heard from constituents who have safety concerns due to speeding vehicles. He asked if another speed study could be done, since the last one was almost a year ago. Chief Kasper responded that unless there have been big changes of some kind, the data is still considered good. She also said that some officers stationed on the street in late December 2020/early January 2021 did not observe any speeding violations;
- Kerry of 26 Olive Street is very concerned about traffic and speeding issues in the summer months;
- Amy of 11 Oliver Street also feels that the data collected in October during the week is not reflective of the bigger problem during the summer. She has produced a video showing an area of the street with heavy pedestrian use and very poor visibility;

- Diana Day said that the type of speed collection device used (covert versus non-covert) could have affected the quality of the data collected;
- Luke Brown of 50 Olive Street said that the presence of a hill makes the situation unique, and that he does not think anyone could feel safe going 30 mph there;
- Carolyn of 31 Olive Street is anecdotally certain that the situation has gotten worse over the 37 years that she has lived there. There are many more families with children who live there now. At night it seems like drivers are drag racing on the street;
- Lilly from the neighborhood has observed two close calls during the pandemic. In one, a speeding driver moved down a hedgerow and could easily have hit the house beyond. In the other incident, a young man in a speeding sedan lost control, hit a tree and flipped over on Old Springfield Road heading toward Olive Street;
- Maris Mann-Stadt of 52 Olive Street submitted this TCR because she was worried about safety. She would like to see more studies done, as she is sure there will be an incident;
- Brett Constantine said that he supports using data analysis and then he and Chief Kasper had a brief discussion about which data would constitute a speeding problem;
- Councilor Nash expressed his concern that excessive speeding will not be captured by the data;
- Chief Kasper spoke of the difficulties of dedicating PD resources to one street which then hampers enforcement in other areas;
- Adam Novitt thinks there should be a lower speed limit because there is a huge visibility problem;
- Scotia MacGillivray of 17 Fort Street said that the neighborhood consists of a lot of old roads and has always been child and pedestrian friendly. The opening of the bridge at Arcadia has caused a very large increase in usage of the roads;
- Nanci Forrestall and Councilors Nash & Foster agreed that this does seem to be more of a seasonal issue. They would like to see another traffic study done and to explore signage, but would like to this move forward;
- Director LaScaleia emphasized that the DPW and the PD are listening and will take all comments under advisement. She encouraged anyone who has additional comments to please email them to dpwinfo@northamptonma.gov or call the DPW at 413-587-1570. Director LaScaleia and Chief Kasper will follow up and engage with Councilor Thorpe as well.

e) Proposed Ordinance for accessible parking in recreation and conservation areas

- Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
- A scrivener's error was identified and will be corrected;
- A motion for a positive recommendation was proposed and seconded;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Off-Street Handicapped Parking Spaces to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Karen Foster	Jim Nash	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- Keith Benoit explained that most of the Conservation/Recreation areas in the City do not have accessible parking spaces, but when they are in place, they cannot be enforced;
- Councilor Nash, Councilor Foster and Nanci Forrestall all expressed their support for the proposed Ordinance;
- A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Updates from Commission Chair and Vice Chair about previously considered Traffic Calming Applications

○ Cross Street

- ❖ The DPW and the PD took all comments that they received under advisement and responded to residents regarding this request which was submitted November 15, 2020;
- ❖ Areas of concern included speeding, parking near the river and visibility problems at Bliss Street;
- ❖ Speed study data did not reveal a speeding problem on Cross Street;
- ❖ The following improvements have been implemented:
 - Stop signs have been installed at the intersections of Cross Street and Florence Road as well as Cross Street and Bliss Street;
 - The DPW removed a hedge that was causing visibility problems since the homeowner was non-responsive to requests to remove it;
 - A parking restriction has been implemented on the river side of the road that should resolve several problems;
- ❖ Councilor Jarrett noted that the removal of the hedge has been very helpful. He has not received any recent complaints from residents.

○ Pine Street

- ❖ The request was submitted in February 2021;
- ❖ Since the area is currently under construction, the DPW wanted to maximize efficiency by including TC improvements in that construction project;
- ❖ The PD collected data from 17,107 vehicles in a speed study, which did not show a speeding problem;
- ❖ A five year collision look-back analysis showed 65 collisions on Pine Street, 44 of which were at the Pine and Maple Street intersection;
- ❖ In the next couple of months, the following recommendations will be implemented:
 - All way stop signs will be installed at the Pine and Maple Street intersection;
 - Mann Street will be made one-way;
 - Sidewalks will be reconstructed;
 - Changes in roadway geometry will be made to cause motorists to slow down. These include shrinking the intersection and doing some necessary drainage work;
- ❖ Councilor Jarrett noted that the residents are very excited about all the changes being implemented, and hopes that there will be some follow-up afterwards to see if they have been effective.

○ Orchard Street

- ❖ Speed data collected by the PD in December of 2020 from 8,400 vehicles did not show any significant speeding problem;
- ❖ A five year collision look-back showed only 3 - 4 collisions;
- ❖ The DPW and the PD did not recommend that any actions be taken;
- ❖ They have spoken to Councilor Nash and the resident who submitted the TCR and explained their findings and conclusions.

7. New Business

- None.

8. Adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Jody Kasper	Nanci Forrestall	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

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Attachment A:

From: **tanya dragan** <tanyadragan@hotmail.com>

Date: Tue, Sep 21, 2021 at 2:31 PM

Subject: For 9/21 mtg: Stop Sign @ Chestnut & Evergreen

To: Dpwinf@northamptonma.gov <Dpwinf@northamptonma.gov>, tanya dragan <tanyadragan@hotmail.com>

Hello,

I am unable to attend the Transportation and Parking Commission meeting scheduled for September 21, 2021, and would like to share my thoughts about the Chestnut Ave Ext/Evergreen Rd intersection, which is on the agenda.

I am a strong supporter for a stop sign at the intersection.

This morning, I counted 50 garages in the Beaver Brook development, with additional cars on people's driveways. That means there is the potential for 100 cars to use that intersection each day (leaving/returning), in addition to the garbage trucks, recycling trucks, UPS, FedEx, AmazonPrime, DHL and other deliveries that come through (sometimes daily), and friends and family visiting.

There are also ~20 children under 15 living on that street (Chestnut Ave Ext and Beaver Brook Loop), and several children who are new drivers.

Those children, in the span of 5 - 10 years, will be drivers, so the number of cars at the intersection will only go up.

In the meantime, those children ride their bikes through that intersection to school and back.

I see no reason not to put in a stop sign. **A few dollars spent now to prevent accident(s) is money well spent!**

Thank you,
Tanya Dragan
9 Beaver Brook Loop